

FILE A – For Optional Classroom Use

English Language Arts:
Released Writing Prompt A-2

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English Language Arts: Released Writing Prompt

Write about an important lesson that children should learn.

NOTE: Each student's total writing score includes a response to this prompt **and** the reading/writing response item based on the passage found on page A-18.

English Language Arts: Released Reading Items

Amir

by Paul Fleischman

In India we have many vast cities, just as in America. There, too, you are one among millions. But there at least you know your neighbors. Here, one cannot say that. The object in America is to avoid contact, to treat all as foes unless they're known to be friends. Here you have a million crabs living in a million crevices.

2 When I saw the garden for the first time, so green among the dark brick buildings, I thought back to my parent's Persian rug. It showed climbing vines, rivers and waterfalls, grapes, flower beds, singing birds, everything a desert dweller might dream of. Those rugs were indeed portable gardens. In the summers in Delhi, so very hot, my sisters and I would lie upon it and try to press ourselves into its world. The garden's green was as soothing to the eye as the deep blue of that rug. I'm aware of color—I manage a fabric store. But the garden's greatest benefit, I feel, was not relief to the eyes, but to make the eyes see our neighbors.

I grew eggplants, onions, carrots, and cauliflower. When the eggplants appeared in August they were pale purple, a strange and eerie shade. When my wife would bring our little son, he was forever wanting to pick them. There was nothing else in the garden with that color. Very many people came over to ask about them and talk to me. I recognized a few from the neighborhood. Not one had spoken to me before—and now how friendly they turned out to be. The eggplants gave them an excuse for breaking the rules and starting a conversation. How happy they seemed to have found this excuse, to let their natural friendliness out.

Those conversations tied us together. In the middle of summer someone dumped a load of tires on the garden at night, as if it were still filled with trash. A man's four rows of young corn were crushed. In an hour, we had all the tires by the curb. We were used to helping each other by then. A few weeks later, early in the evening a woman screamed, down the block from the garden. A man with a knife had taken her purse. Three men from the garden ran after him. I was surprised that I was one of them. Even more surprising, we caught him. Royce held the man to a wall with his pitchfork until the police arrived. I asked the others. Not one of us had ever chased a criminal before. And most likely we wouldn't have except near the garden. There, you felt part of a community.

5 I came to the United States in 1980. Cleveland is a city of immigrants. The Poles are especially well known here. I'd always heard that the Polish men were tough steelworkers and that the women cooked lots of cabbage. But I'd never known one—until the garden. She was an old woman whose space bordered mine. She had a seven-block walk to the garden, the same route I took. We spoke quite often. We both planted carrots. When her hundreds of seedlings came up in a row, I was very surprised that she did not thin them—pulling out all but one healthy-looking plant each few inches, to give them some room to grow. I asked her. She looked down at them and said she knew she ought to do it, but that this task reminded her too closely of her concentration camp, where the prisoners were inspected each morning and divided into two lines—the healthy to live and the others to die. Her father, an orchestra violinist, had spoken out against the Germans, which had caused her family's arrest. When I heard her words, I realized how useless was all that I'd heard about Poles, how much richness it hid, like the worthless shell around an almond. I still do not know, or care, whether she cooks cabbage.

6

The garden found this out with Royce. He was young and black. He looked rather dangerous. People watched him and seemed to be relieved when he left the garden. Then he began spending more time there. We found out that he had a stutter. Then that he had two sisters, that he liked the cats that roamed through the garden, and that he worked very well with his hands. Soon all the mothers were trying to feed him. How very strange it was to watch people who would have crossed the street if they'd seen him coming a few weeks before, now giving him vegetables, more than he could eat. In return, he watered for people who were sick and fixed fences and made other repairs. He might weed your garden or use the bricks from the building that was torn down up the block to make you a brick path between your rows. He always pretended he hadn't done it. It was always a surprise. One felt honored to be chosen. He was trusted and liked—and famous, after his exploit with the pitchfork. He was not a black teenage boy. He was Royce.

In September he and a Mexican man collected many bricks from up the street and built a big barbecue. I was in the garden on Saturday when the Mexican family drove up in a truck with a dead pig in the back. They built a fire, put a heavy metal spit through the pig, and began to roast it. A bit later their friends began arriving. One brought a guitar, another played violin. They filled the folding table with food. Perhaps it was one of their birthdays, or perhaps no reason was needed for the party. It was beautiful weather, sunny but not hot. Fall was just beginning and the garden was changing from green to brown. Those of us who had come to work felt the party's spirit enter us. The smell of the roasting pig drifted out and called to everyone, gardeners or not. Soon the entire garden was filled.

It was a harvest festival, like those in India, though no one had planned it to be. People brought food and drinks and drums. I went home to get my wife and son. Watermelons from the garden were sliced open. The gardeners proudly showed off what they'd grown. We traded harvests, as we often did. And we gave food away, as we often did also—even I, a businessman, trained to give away nothing, to always make a profit. The garden provided many excuses for breaking that particular rule.

Many people spoke to me that day. Several asked where I was from. I wondered if they knew as little about Indians as I had known about Poles. One old woman, Italian I believe, said she'd admired my eggplants for weeks and told me how happy she was to meet me. She praised them and told me how to cook them and asked all about my family. But something bothered me. Then I remembered. A year before she'd claimed that she'd received the wrong change in my store. I was called out to the register. She'd gotten quite angry and called me—despite her own accent—a dirty foreigner. Now that we were so friendly with each other I dared to remind her of this. Her eyes became huge. She apologized to me over and over again. She kept saying, "Back then, I didn't know it was you. . . ."

1. In the first paragraph the narrator states, "Here you have a million crabs living in a million crevices." This sentence is an example of
- ☐ A. onomatopoeia.
 - ☐ B. a simile.
 - ☐ C. a metaphor.
 - ☐ D. personification.
2. Which sentence **best** summarizes paragraph 2?
- ☐ A. Persian rugs show beautiful outdoor scenes.
 - ☐ B. The garden reminds the narrator of his life in India.
 - ☐ C. It is refreshing to think of cool things when the weather is hot.
 - ☐ D. The narrator understands color because he manages a fabric store.
3. The narrator's eggplants provide his neighbors with an opportunity to
- ☐ A. show their jealousy of him.
 - ☐ B. talk to him.
 - ☐ C. plant other types of vegetables.
 - ☐ D. learn about India.
4. In paragraph 5, why does the narrator say, "I realized how useless was all that I'd heard about Poles"?
- ☐ A. What he had heard was different from what the people were really like.
 - ☐ B. He did not know anything about foreigners.
 - ☐ C. He had been told lies about the Polish people.
 - ☐ D. The information he was told was difficult for him to understand.
5. What did the narrator learn about the Polish woman by discussing her carrots?
- ☐ A. The carrot seedlings reminded her of her family's past.
 - ☐ B. She knew how to grow better carrots than he did.
 - ☐ C. She did not know much about growing carrots.
 - ☐ D. The carrots helped her survive in a concentration camp.
6. At the end of paragraph 6, why does the narrator say, "He was Royce"?
- ☐ A. to introduce Royce to the Polish woman
 - ☐ B. to explain why he liked Royce
 - ☐ C. to describe Royce's dangerous behavior
 - ☐ D. to say that he saw Royce as an individual
7. What does the garden **most clearly** represent to the people at the end of the story?
- ☐ A. liberty
 - ☐ B. differences
 - ☐ C. community
 - ☐ D. survival
8. The **main** theme of this story is about
- ☐ A. many people gardening with separate plots.
 - ☐ B. America's many conflicting cultures.
 - ☐ C. the need for producing our own food.
 - ☐ D. overcoming stereotypes to share and work together.

9. Explain how the garden changes **two** of the characters in the story. Give reasons for these changes.

9.

[illegible]

- Explain your answer, using details from the story as support.

[illegible]

YOU CAN BE AN INVENTOR

by Fred M.B. Amram and Sandra A. Brick

1. **Identify problems.** Inventors solve problems. Look around you. What needs improving? What bugs you? List (brainstorm) more than fifteen problems.

Examples

My pencil doesn't stay sharp.

My shoelaces won't stay tied.

My backpack falls off my shoulder when I try to carry it.

Keep going!

2. **Judge.** Select a problem from your list and write a few words about it. Don't worry. You will find solutions. That's the point of inventing.

Example

"My backpack falls off my shoulder when I try to carry it." Backpacks have two straps so that you can carry them on your back—using two shoulders. But nobody uses both shoulders. Kids just sling them on one side, and the pack slips down the arm because the weight is uneven. What a drag!

3. **Brainstorm.** List all the solutions you can think of (at least thirty). List practical and crazy ideas. Don't judge!

Examples

Shorter straps

Attach to belt

Snap to jacket

OK, now really stretch. Think of some way-out ideas. Think of some ideas that might make a teacher or parent angry. Try to create twenty more ideas. (I sensed some judging. Did you censor some ideas because they were too outrageous? Too bizarre?)

Examples

Glue backpack to clothing.

Don't bring any books home.

One strap from corner to corner (angle).

4. **Judge.** Pick an idea (or combination of ideas) that turns you on. When you have done that, elaborate. Think of ideas that will make it work.

Example

“One strap from corner to corner (angle).” I like the idea of inventing a backpack that has one strap that goes from one corner to the other. Then it will balance better on one shoulder. I’ll need to experiment with a weighted pack to see which angle works best. Perhaps I can start a company to manufacture the Angle Pack.

5. **Stretch.** A final burst of creativity might make the backpack even better. List five ways in which you can improve your idea. Elaborate on the ideas you like most.

Example

“Snap to jacket.” One of my ideas was to snap the backpack to my jacket. Perhaps I can use the snap idea in a different way. Can I snap the strap to the backpack?

One of the problems with my Angle Pack is that it would be designed for the right shoulder or the left shoulder. If I had four snaps on the back of the pack, I could sell the strap separately (different colors?) and kids could use whichever snaps they wanted to create a comfortable angle.

6. **Implement!** Make your new product and brainstorm ways to sell it.
7. **Discussion.** What was difficult about inventing? Was it hard to share “crazy” ideas? Was it fun to discover that sometimes bizarre ideas can work? Was it interesting to see that other students could see the positive in a “silly” idea?

11. What is the **main** way in which the authors make the list of steps in this article more interesting for the reader?

- ☐ A. They print each step in boldface type.
- ☐ B. They provide examples for most steps.
- ☐ C. They number each step to highlight the order.
- ☐ D. They start each step with a one-word summary.

12. The language used in this article can **best** be described as

- ☐ A. casual.
- ☐ B. formal.
- ☐ C. dialect.
- ☐ D. technical.

13. Which sentence **best** expresses the main idea of step 5?

- ☐ A. Creative ideas are difficult to come up with.
- ☐ B. Backpack straps can be snapped to clothing.
- ☐ C. Good ideas can often be improved.
- ☐ D. Kids want their backpacks to be comfortable.

14. The **main** purpose of this article is to

- ☐ A. entertain.
- ☐ B. inform.
- ☐ C. analyze.
- ☐ D. instruct.

15. Steps 1 and 3 ask the reader to make long lists of ideas without judging them. In your own words, explain the value of such lists. Use information from the article and your own examples to support your answer.

15.

Why I Never Shoot Bears

by Charles E. Goodspeed

FRED JENNES, veteran woods guide of Greenville, Maine, tells this tall tale and swears by all the Bibles in Piscataquis County that it is gospel truth:

“Do you know why I don’t kill bears?” he asked. “No! Well, it’s this way. Three years ago this June I was on a fishing trip up to Grand Lake. I had been out on the water pretty nearly all of one day and, getting tired, paddled back to camp. I hauled the canoe up on the sandy beach and started for the shack.

“When I got within about 100 feet of the place I saw the front door was open. I peeked in. There stood a big black bear just pulling the cork out of my molasses jug with his teeth. Out came the sticky syrup all over the floor. Bruin lapped up some of it and then rubbed his right paw into the rest—smeared it all over.

“So I crept around behind the camp, stuck my head in the window and yelled. He shot through the door like a bullet and headed for the lake. I never saw such an odd gait on a bear before—sort of mixture of running and galloping. And all on three legs. He was holding up the paw daubed with molasses.

“From where I stood it looked as if the critter had sat down on the shore and was holding his sweetened paw up to the air. It was June and the air was full of flies, mosquitoes and black midges. I could see that they were swarming around that molasses foot. Soon it was covered with flies feasting on that stuff.

“Suddenly he waded out in the water and stood up. He was in to his shoulders. He placed the sweetened paw down close to the surface and the next thing I saw a fine trout jump clear of the water at those flies.

“Every time a fish leaped clear of the water, Bruin would give it a cuff that sent it ashore and far up the beach.

“Finally as he saw the pile of trout on the sand he seemed to think he had enough. He waded ashore lapping off the insects and I expected he would sit down and gobble every fish. I recalled that all I had caught that day was two small fish.

“Well, sir, he had a fine feed, and when he had eaten half a dozen fine big trout, he paused, looked over at the bushes where I was and actually laid the remaining fish in a row. Then he ambled off up the shore and oddly enough kept looking back over his shoulder.

“I walked down to the beach and true enough there were half a dozen wonderful trout. At the edge of the woods the bear stopped and was standing up. As loud as I could, I yelled, ‘Thanks old man!’ Do you know he actually waved a paw at me and dove into the thicket. I honestly think he left me those fish to pay for my spilled molasses. No, *sir*; I never shoot bears.”

16. The **main** purpose of the first two paragraphs is to provide the story's

- ☐ A. theme.
- ☐ B. conflict.
- ☐ C. setting.
- ☐ D. purpose.

17. "He was holding up the paw daubed with molasses." The word **daubed** means

- ☐ A. coated.
- ☐ B. diluted.
- ☐ C. sticky.
- ☐ D. touched.

18. Why did the bear hold his sweetened paw in the air while he was sitting on the shore?

- ☐ A. to keep bugs away
- ☐ B. to wave at Fred Jennes
- ☐ C. to eat the molasses
- ☐ D. to attract bugs

19. It can be inferred from the story that Fred's reason for saying he never shoots bears is that

- ☐ A. bears like trout fishing as much as he does.
- ☐ B. Fred likes and respects them.
- ☐ C. bears leave him alone.
- ☐ D. Fred is afraid they will steal his molasses.

20. What is a tall tale? Describe **three** specific events in this story that show why it is considered a "tall tale."

20.

HURRICANES

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HURRICANES, CYCLONES, AND TYPHOONS?

These three words all describe the same phenomenon: a tropical storm of fierce spiraling winds. Such storms occur around the world, but only between the equator and latitudes 30° north and south of it. When these storms occur in the Atlantic Ocean, they are called hurricanes. They are called cyclones in the Indian Ocean and typhoons in the Pacific Ocean. Cyclone is also a generic word for a whirlpool of wind.

WHAT CAUSES A HURRICANE?

Hurricanes result from an increasingly strong storm system over water. When air over warm ocean water is heated by the Sun to about 81° Fahrenheit (27° Celsius), it rises in severely increased updrafts and low pressure. Numerous, large convection cells (circulation patterns of warm air rising, cooling, and condensing) go to work creating a widespread storm, lowering the air pressure more and more. The cells merge and great winds begin to blow as surrounding high pressure air moves in to equalize the low pressure. Winds tend to blow in the same direction, clockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and counterclockwise in the Southern Hemisphere, which creates a whirlpool, or cyclone. Meanwhile, the convection cell is constantly fed by the heat of condensing air and the wind, growing larger and stronger. When the winds reach a speed of about 75 miles (120 kilometers) per hour, the storm has become a hurricane.

ARE HURRICANES ONLY WIND STORMS?

Not only are hurricane winds ferocious, but vast amounts of rain pour down from the saturated clouds. In a single day, a hurricane can unleash as much precipitation as falls over a whole year in rainy Seattle, Washington.

The strong air currents of a hurricane also churn up vast amounts of ocean water, called **storm surges**, creating large waves weighing hundreds of tons. Coastal damage from these giant waves can easily equal or surpass the devastation of a hurricane's winds.

In Australia, tropical storms of fierce spiraling winds are also known as willy-willies.

Hurricanes can grow to be over 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) wide with wind speeds of 200 miles (320 kilometers) per hour.

WHAT IS THE EYE OF A HURRICANE?

A hurricane is a spiral of winds racing up to 200 miles (320 kilometers) per hour, but in the middle of the whirlpool lies a calm center called the eye. As unbelievable as it sounds, the sheer force of the storm in its spiral formation allows some 10 to 30 miles (16 to 48 kilometers) at the center to remain unaffected. The weather within the eye of a hurricane is warm, still, and cloudless.

HURRICANE NAMES

In Chinese, *ta-feng* means “violent winds.” A mispronunciation of this word became the name for the violent cyclones in the Pacific Ocean: typhoons. The generic term *cyclone* was coined in 1844 and was meant to call to mind the whirling image of a coiled, striking snake. The word *hurricane* comes from the language of an extinct West Indian tribe, the Taino. *Huracan* meant “evil spirit” and was associated with the God of Evil who sent wind storms to punish people.

The custom of naming hurricanes began at least 150 years ago. Early names were taken from Christian saints traditionally honored the day a hurricane happened to take place. The 1825 hurricane Santa Ana was named for Saint Ann. From 1953 to 1979, hurricanes were christened with female names, beginning with the letter A and proceeding through the alphabet. One impact of the feminist revolution in the 1970s was to begin using male as well as female names. Now the names run through the alphabet alternating male and female.

21. In the first paragraph the author states, “Cyclone is also a generic word for a whirlpool of wind.” The word **generic** means
- ☐ A. severe.
 - ☐ B. uncertain.
 - ☐ C. common.
 - ☐ D. popular.
22. The difference between hurricanes, typhoons, and cyclones is their
- ☐ A. location.
 - ☐ B. force.
 - ☐ C. frequency.
 - ☐ D. duration.
23. What is a storm surge?
- ☐ A. a windstorm that has power
 - ☐ B. ocean water carried by air currents
 - ☐ C. the eye of a hurricane
 - ☐ D. a type of hurricane
24. Most coastal damage caused by hurricanes is from winds and
- ☐ A. rain.
 - ☐ B. waves.
 - ☐ C. lightning.
 - ☐ D. backlash.

25. The eye of the hurricane is all of the following **except**

- ☐ A. 10 to 30 miles of unaffected space.
- ☐ B. warm, still, and cloudless weather.
- ☐ C. located in the middle of the hurricane.
- ☐ D. the location of the heaviest rain.

26. The sidebars to this passage are used **mainly** to

- ☐ A. summarize essential information.
- ☐ B. give the author's opinions.
- ☐ C. add interesting facts.
- ☐ D. define difficult terms.

27. Typhoons got their name from

- ☐ A. a mispronunciation of the word ta-feng.
- ☐ B. an extinct West Indian tribe, the Taino.
- ☐ C. the feminist revolution of the 1970s.
- ☐ D. saints honoring the day a storm occurred.

28. What is the **probable** reason why hurricanes today are named after both men and women?

- ☐ A. Both men and women are sometimes named after saints.
- ☐ B. Men's names are needed because there are not enough women's names.
- ☐ C. Men's and women's names are equally interesting.
- ☐ D. Men's and women's names should be treated equally.

29. In your own words, explain how a hurricane is formed. Use details from the passage to support your answer.

29.

**English Language Arts:
Released Reading/Writing
Response Item**

HURRICANES

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30. Based on information from the passage, explain why hurricanes are feared. Use information from the passage to support your answer.

30.

[illegible]

Health Education: Released Items

- Which drug in tobacco is **most** addictive?
 - nitrogen
 - tar
 - carbon monoxide
 - nicotine
 - Pamela rarely exercises, eats a lot of foods high in fat, eats few vegetables, and gets only six hours of sleep a night. Pamela is increasing her risk for
 - food poisoning.
 - a heart attack.
 - liver cancer.
 - a brain tumor.
 - Peggy wants to include beta carotene in her diet to help maintain normal vision and to keep her skin healthy. Which of these foods would provide the **most** beta carotene?
 - broccoli
 - carrots
 - pinto beans
 - beets
- Describe two advertising techniques that are often used to sell health-related products and services.
 - Explain how you would decide whether or not to buy these health-related products.

5. a. Identify **three** specific health services a community might have.
b. Describe what each one does.

5.

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Sources of the exercises selected for this test include: Maine State Advisory Committees, Measured Progress, and previous Maine state testing programs.